



Using The Campaign

This publication reviews the basic elements that apply to any organization interested in supporting youth. It is not necessary to be a youth-serving organization to serve the needs of youth. Any organization -- including a business, faith community, civic group, or government agency -- can contribute to enhancing "The Right Stuff."

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) and the National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations have identified six essential elements of effective youth-development programs. [1] These elements are:

1. A comprehensive strategy with a clear mission and goals.
2. Committed, caring, and professional leadership.
3. Youth-centered activities in youth-accessible facilities.
4. Culturally competent and diverse programs.
5. Youth ownership and involvement.
6. A positive focus that includes all youth.

In order to develop a program for youth that has these six elements, it will be helpful to recruit a planning group that is representative of youth, parents, and your organization's staff. This group can then complete the following steps:

Identify needs. Ask youth in your organization or community to identify the specific needs they have. What issues would they like your program to address?

Design a program. Engage youth and parents in establishing outcomes they hope your program will accomplish. Use each desired outcome as the basis for creating age-appropriate activities.

Define roles for volunteers and staff. After defining program outcomes and activities, clearly articulate the roles of volunteers and staff and put them into writing. The role descriptions need to define how volunteers and staff will help youth build specific skills through participation in your program.

Recruit volunteers. Do not rely on professional staff alone to run "The Right Stuff" programs and activities. Potential sources of volunteers can include older youth, parents, and a variety of people from organizations such as businesses, civic organizations, faith communities, fraternities and sororities.

Recruit youth. Target youth who may already be involved or have an affiliation with your organization or design an outreach plan to engage youth who may not have any access to positive activities in a healthy environment.

Recognize and celebrate accomplishments. On a regular basis, provide a forum to acknowledge youths' progress and participation. Create opportunities for youth, parents, volunteers, and staff to thank one another for their time and effort.



The following are some sample "The Right Stuff" program ideas for various types of organizations to consider as options. Some programs may require adult supervision.

Youth-Serving Organization

- Provide facilities and equipment for youth to engage in sports and recreation activities. Host an end-of-year youths' sports day with a respected athlete or well-known community sports figure.
- Sponsor a book club. Have youth discuss books that portray positive role models. Ask a local librarian for assistance in creating a list of appropriate books.
- Host a "Right Stuff!" day. Provide workshops for youth focusing on respect, personal boundaries, healthy relationships, treating others with respect, and the negative effects of drinking alcohol, smoking, and using illicit drugs.

Faith Community

- Involve youth in all aspects of religious activities.
- Collaborate with other faith communities to host a "The Right Stuff" day. Invite speakers to give interactive workshops on topics such as substance abuse prevention, nutrition, and physical activity. Conclude with a potluck dinner.
- Hold a weekend retreat or 24-hour "lock-in" for youth, facilitated by adults, with presentations on self-care, substance abuse prevention, sexual values, and personal boundaries. Include art activities or have the youth develop and perform skits.
- Sponsor a club for youth that includes community-service projects such as cleaning up a neighborhood, visiting the elderly, or painting a community center.
- Host a "Day Out." Invite selected college students and young adults to take middle school youth to a movie, art exhibit, museum, or a special community event. Conclude with a special theme dinner.
- Offer classes or workshops on gender-specific development issues for parents of adolescent youth. Invite high school youth to speak about the issues, pressures, and stresses they face and to provide honest feedback to parents' questions.

Civic Organization or Professional Association

- Sponsor a career day. Invite members of your organization to give presentations to youth on different career opportunities. Include both traditional and nontraditional careers.
- Host an essay contest. Invite youth to read winning essays at your organization's year-end banquet or annual meeting.
- Involve youth in planning a local charity event such as a walk-a-thon or a car wash. Give youth specific responsibilities, such as recruiting sponsors or advertising the event.
- Start a speakers' bureau. Make a list of people in your organization who are willing and qualified to make presentations on topics of interest to young youth, including education, careers, health issues, and life skills. Circulate the list to youth-serving organizations in your community.
- Sponsor an arts appreciation day for youth. Arrange for youth to attend a gallery opening or a theater production. Contact a local musician and ask her to conduct a workshop for youth.

Business

- Develop a mentoring program for youth. Participate in take your child to work days, or invite youth to shadow one or more employees for a designated period of time, such as once a week for 2 months. Host brown-bag lunches to discuss careers, schooling, office skills, and job interviews.
- Provide time and a specific location during business hours for employees to tutor youth.
- Offer volunteer or internship opportunities for youth. Show the youth how the organization works and give them specific job responsibilities. Offer training on how to use the company's computers or other office equipment.
- Donate advertising funds to help publicize a local "The Right Stuff" event.
- Sponsor an athletic team or a club. Print T-shirts with both the "The Right Stuff" logo and the company logo.
- Assist youth in the development and maintenance of their own "The Right Stuff" web site.

School

- Start an after school "The Right Stuff" club that meets once a week or twice a month. In each meeting, focus on a specific topic such as good nutrition, physical activity, or mental health. Have the youth perform skits, paint murals, or create videos about each topic. Open or conclude each session with a healthy snack and social time.
- Host a "leap night" event for youth, celebrating the transition from elementary to middle school, or from middle school to high school. Encourage older youth to serve as mentors to younger youth.
- Invite a nutritionist or health education teacher to conduct a seminar for youth on the importance of eating properly and the warning signs of eating disorders. Have the youth write a nutrition article for the school newspaper.
- Encourage youth to attend local school board meetings and voice the youth point of view.



Medical or Health Care Facility

- Sponsor a "The Right Stuff" health fair. Provide information for youth on healthy physical development, nutrition, physical activity, and substance abuse prevention.
- Develop a list of physicians or health care professionals who are willing to speak at "The Right Stuff" events on health, mental health, and substance abuse issues for youth.
- Provide space for "The Right Stuff" activities in your medical or health care facility.
- Provide free physical examinations for youth from high-risk environments.

State or Local Government Agency

- Have a "The Right Stuff" day or week proclamation signed by the mayor, city or county council members, Governor, or other appropriate dignitaries.
- Work with local social services, substance abuse prevention, and health organizations to sponsor a "The Right Stuff" day. Include workshops and presentations on health and substance abuse prevention topics.
- Sponsor a "Youth in Government" day. Invite youth to serve as interns for a day and to shadow lawmakers, judges, and administrative staff. Host a luncheon to discuss the role of government or the legislative process.



Communication & Public Awareness

To raise awareness of the needs of youth in your community, make sure that your organization's brochures and promotional materials show equal numbers of boys and girls and depict youth in a positive manner. Promote positive activities for youth in your organization's newsletters and publications. Publish "The Right Stuff" PSAs in your newsletter, or you can sponsor placement in another publication and include your organization's/corporation's information or logo in the print PSA.

Resources

Every organization has a multitude of resources, including professional experts, products, materials, and funds. After you have revisited your mission and determined the investment that your organization is willing to make in the lives of youth, assess your resources for doing so. Because the presence of a caring adult in a youth's life is often the most important factor in their healthy development, it is important to remember that people are your organization's most valuable resource. Every organization has individuals who can serve as mentors, volunteers, coaches, or tutors.

[1] National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations, 1994. Building Resiliency, What Works: A Community Guide to Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Through Positive Youth Development, p. 25.